

**PRAYER THAT NEVER GIVES UP**  
**Luke 11:5-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:17**

**INTRODUCTION:**

I recently heard the story of R. A. Torrey, an author I have quoted a couple of times at least in these sessions. He had two friends for whom he prayed most of his life. Trusting the promises of God for their salvation, he interceded for them year after year with no apparent results. Within a week or so of his death, word came that one of the men had come to know Christ as Savior—a report that was met with joyful thanksgiving. But what still of the other man? Torrey died without seeing the answer to that prayer...but the man came to know Christ at Torrey's funeral!

For whom have you and I been praying with persistence, believing and trusting that God would indeed answer if we refused to give up?

There are two exhortations we cannot afford to neglect in our practice of prayer: pray through until the answer comes and pray always until Jesus comes.

**I. PRACTICES TO BE CULTIVATED**

--If we expect to grow in prayer, there are certain keys that cannot be neglected in the cultivation of a satisfying, effective life of prayer.

**A. DRAW NEAR**

--Wait until you are in His presence!

--Be still, as we have already noted and do not be so quick to run off in every direction until you have made a genuine connection in a personal way with the Lord.

**1. We are naturally distant from Him**

***Eph. 2:12-13** remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

**2. We are graciously drawn near to Him.**

***Heb. 4:16** Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.*

--Having once been distant and having now been drawn near, why would we forfeit the nearness of God and settle for a remote, disconnected relationship?

**B. TRAIN DILIGENTLY**

--Prayer is hard labor, intense work that requires more than you and I have to give.

***Col. 4:12** Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God.*

--Does that describe prayer for you? Or is it more likely to be a half-hearted effort that may see you give up before you hook up with the Lord in meaningful conversation?

--Therefore, we must train in prayer and do so diligently if we hope to make any progress.

--Conferences are great helps, books are wonderful encouragement, brothers and sisters are steadfast allies—but when it comes down to it, you must PRAY!

--That requires a certain amount of information and instruction, but then it boils down to getting alone with the Lord and getting on-the-job training from the Holy Spirit.

**NT Words:**

**Paideo**—instruction with the intent of forming proper habits of behavior

**Gumnazo**—experience vigorous training and control, usually through keeping yourself disciplined (sometimes with the idea of “commanding your own heart, making yourself obey)

In each of four passages dealing with training, there are goals in mind for the training:

- **righteousness** (2 Tim 3:16),
- **holiness** (Heb 12:11),
- **knowledge/wisdom** (Heb 5:14) and
- **witness** (1 Cor 9:25).

--If you are finding that these seem to be elusive to you in your pursuit of Christ, God speaks a word of encouragement to you and offers you a plan to follow in making these become a reality in your life!

**C. PRAY WHOLEHEARTEDLY**

--Half-hearted praying which believes little, expects less and invests nothing will produce drudgery in the private place of prayer!

**ILLUS.** In Jerusalem back in April, during a Sabbath evening at the Wailing Wall, I noticed a young man, a Hassidic Jew leaving the wall, walking backwards all the way back through the entrance. While at the wall, like most men, he prayed with his Torah in hand, rocking back and forth, eyes facing the wall.

I asked him why he backed away instead of turning to leave. He explained that it was out of reverence for the holy place, the last remaining portion of the Temple where God in His glory was last known to have been.

Rocking back and forth while praying provided a way for the whole person to be involved in prayer...not just the words...not just the mind...not just the heart, but the body as well!

--We do not have to stand, or kneel, or lift up our hands, or assume any specific posture to pray with our whole heart, but whatever it takes before the Lord to put our heart into our praying, the benefit will be immediate!

**D. PERSIST FAITHFULLY**

--I have sometimes wondered why I need to pray about something repeatedly, persistently, relentlessly, as Jesus says in the two parables about importunate praying.

**1. Shameless Persistence**

**Luke 11:8** "I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

### **Lessons in Persistence:**

#### **a. Perseverance in Prayer**

If there is no fuel of passion for the fires of prayer, we will not learn to persist in prayer.

--If you pray about a matter that does not happen to grip your heart, if you can take or leave God's response to your request, why should it matter to God?

--If you do not have any passion about your requests, ask the Lord to give you whatever passion you need to cling to Him until He answers.

**ILLUS.** Growing up in a household of four boys, you had to learn to make your voice heard at the dinner table. Now with three sons of my own, I still see the value of making sure that someone hears when I ask for something beyond my reach.

At a conference I attended back in 1980, Dr. Henry Brandt told a story about one of his children at the dinner table. While in his doctoral studies, the Brandts invited the president of the school and his wife over for dinner and made the strategic error of placing their five year old son next to the president. As the dinner conversation grew into a lively adult discussion, the appeal of the little boy for the salt went unnoticed by the president sitting next to him. After two more polite but futile attempts of "Please pass the salt," the little guy pulled himself around in front of the president and said, "If you don't pass the salt, I'm going to knock your block off!" He got the salt...and I'm sure quite a few other unexpected consequences from his parents.

When his first appeals went unmet, he did not give up because he really wanted the salt. What do you really want from the Lord and need for Him to do that brings passions into your praying that keep the fires of petition burning brightly?

#### **b. Patience in Prayer**

If there is no period of delays after our prayers for intervention, we will not learn to be patient in prayer.

--If the answer always came the first time we asked, we would never learn to be patient and wait on the Lord in our praying.

--Confronting periods of delay, occasional denials and even failures as a result of our requests going unanswered only provides the foundations for persistent praying.

--No courage in prayer is required when all goes perfectly well right away, or if all things in our lives run smoothly and need no special attention or bold intervention or dramatic action.

#### **c. Dependence upon Prayer**

If there is no sense of need for the resources of God, we will not learn to depend upon prayer.

--One of the greatest obstacles to persistent and persevering prayer in our lives is that we seldom seem to sense that we are in desperate need of Him.

--Thinking ourselves to be self-sufficient and invulnerable rather than insufficient and vulnerable like the two people in the parables, we find that we get along just as well in our minds whether we pray or not!

--Although we would consider it heresy to say so, we frequently act as if praying did not make any difference any way and so we simply neglect it as the least likely spiritual discipline to be noticed by others.

--In short, we have come to believe that we do not realistically have to depend on prayer so why persist in something of such unknown practical value?

**d. Power of Prayer**

If there is no sense of recognition for the answers to prayer, we will not learn to appreciate the power of prayer.

--If we pray about things that do not matter enough to persist in prayer over them, when God does intervene and answer our prayers we will fail to recognize His hand and not appreciate the power of what He had done in response to prayer,

--We need to learn to ask, seek and knock and then wait expectantly at the door for the answer so that we get into the habit of watching for the moving of the hand of the Lord.

--Only then will we appreciate the power of the Lord and the importance of persistent praying in unleashing the power of the Lord in the lives of His children.

**e. Confidence in Prayer**

If there is no practice of praying as a remedy against fatalism, we will not learn to trust in the God of prayer.

--After mentioning our requests to the Lord, it is easy to fall into the trap of *fatalistic* thinking (what is going to happen is going to happen whether I pray or not).

--If we have brought it to His attention once, He is God--He won't forget!

--By that line of reasoning, there would be no need to pray any way because not only does He not forget, He knows all things and does not need to be told.

--The issues at stake are for us, not for Him.

We must pray because...

- He told us to do so
- He wants us to see the relationship between trusting Him in prayer and seeing Him respond
- He wants us to be reminded that we need to depend on Him
- He wants us to develop the practices of praise and thanksgiving

--We are to pray at all times and learn what it is like to have confidence in the Lord and express that confidence through persistent and faithful prayer.

--God has given us permission to be persistent in bringing our requests to Him.

--We do not get a lecture from our Father restricting our requests to just one item or two.

--He invites us to come to Him and with dogged determination hang on in faithful, steadfast prayer until He answers.

What do you need to do to change your approach to prayer so that you do not lose heart but keep going until God answers?

- Pray for Him to ignite a passion in your heart so that what you pray really matters to you.
- Keep track of what you have asked and watch as He answers so that you can find encouragement and express appreciation.
- Do not become presumptuous and assume that He already knows all and does not need to hear any more from you.
- Ask the Spirit to lead you in prayer to pray for what matters to Him for as long as it takes and to give you the determination to stick it out in His power.

Jesus obviously thought that this subject was very important since He talked about it twice and illustrated His point with these two different parables. Since it mattered so much to Him, should it not also matter to us? What will you do to become more persistent in prayer?

## 2. Relentless Petition

### Ideas from David Wells

*I want to argue that our feeble and irregular prayer, especially in its petitionary aspect, is too frequently addressed in the wrong way. When confronting this failing, we are inclined to flagellate ourselves for our weak wills, our insipid desires, our ineffective technique and our wandering minds.*

*What, then, is the nature of petitionary prayer? It is, in essence, rebellion—rebellion against the world in its fallenness, the absolute and undying refusal to accept as normal what is pervasively abnormal. It is, in this its negative aspect, the refusal of every agenda, every scheme, every interpretation that is at odds with the norm as originally established by God.*

--And so we can be shamelessly persistent, relentlessly stubborn in praying for the Lord to overturn the unnatural, abnormal state of a world in defiance against God!

## 3. Ceaseless Prayer

--Last of all, we never leave the Lord behind when we rise up from our times of prayer.

--He is always in our thoughts, present with us in our days, guiding us as we walk through life.

--And so we think much of the Lord...converse with Him as we desire, all along the days of our lives.

**ILLUS.** A little boy wrote a short note to the Lord which said, "Dear God, I think about you sometimes even when I'm not praying. Elliott"

***1Th. 5:17*** *pray without ceasing;*

--As we depart with a better appreciation for the glory and blessing of prayer today, may we leave with a steadfast commitment to find our **place in His presence**...and as we go, may we "pray without ceasing" as we think much about our God and give Him glory in all that we do.

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